

Message Text

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TO USIA WASHDC

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STATE FOR NEA

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: PRESS CENSORSHIP IN INDIAN NEWSPAPERS

BEGIN SUMMARY: MOST NEW DELHI DAILIES JULY 9 FRONT-PAGED THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA STAND ON PRESS CENSORSHIP IN THE COUNTRY. THERE WERE TWO MAJOR STORIES, ONE BASED ON MRS. GANDHI'S INTERVIEW WITH CURRENT, A BOMBAY WEEKLY, AND THE OTHER BASED ON MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING V.C. SHUKLA'S ADDRESS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ATTACHED TO HIS MINISTRY. END SUMMARY.

1. FOUR MAJOR PAPERS CARRIED MRS. GANDHI'S REMARKS IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE EDITOR OF CURRENT THAT THERE WAS A NEED TO EVOLVE "CERTAIN CODES OF CONDUCT" FOR THE PRESS AND ENSURE THEY ARE FOLLOWED. TYPICAL HEADLINE: "CODES OF CONDUCT FOR PRESS URGED" (TIMES OF INDIA).

2. BASED ON UNITED NEWS OF INDIA DISPATCHES, STORY QUOTED MRS. GANDHI THAT SHE DID NOT THINK CENSORSHIP WAS THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT "ATTEMPTS BY SECTIONS OF THE PRESS TO SUPPRESS TRUTH AND FACTS IN THE PRE-EMERGENCY DAYS" AND THAT THE PRESS ITSELF SHOULD SEE TO IT.

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3. WHEN TOLD THAT NEWSPAPERS WHICH HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE SITUATION SHOULD NOT BE PENALISED, MRS. GANDHI SAID "I HOPE SOMETHING WILL BE WORKED OUT."

4. OTHER DAILIES CARRIED MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING V C SHUKLA'S STATEMENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN PAPERS BELONGING TO THE OPPOSITION AND OTHERS IN APPLYING CENSORSHIP REGULATIONS. TYPICAL HEADLINE: "CENSORSHIP RULES BEING APPLIED UNIFORMLY" (STATESMAN).

5. BASED ON PRESS TRUST OF INDIA WIRESERVICE, REPORTS QUOTED SHUKLA AS SAYING "BROAD GUIDELINES OF CENSORSHIP WERE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT LIKE PUBLICATION OF BASELESS RUMORS AND SUCH ITEMS AND VIEWS WHICH MIGHT CAUSE DISAFFECTION AND ENCOURAGE INDISCIPLINE AMONG PUBLIC SERVANTS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES."

6. SHUKLA ALSO TOLD THE MEETING THAT IT HAD BEEN MADE CLEAR TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOREIGN PRESS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ALLOW VIOLATION OF CENSOR RULES UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES AND WOULD TAKE FIRM ACTION AGAINST THOSE WHO IGNORE THEM.

7. NATIONAL HERALD FRONT PAGED OWN STORY "STEPS AGAINST IRRESPONSIBLE PRESS NEEDED -- "AIL SINGH" QUOTING THE PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO PUT SOME RESTRAINTS TO CHECK THE MISGUIDED POLICIES OF THOSE NEWSPAPERS WHICH BELIEVED IN GIVING SENSATIONAL AND DISTORTED NEWS. HEMSING

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